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ABSTRACT

In a study utilizing high school sophomores with reading problems and their tutors it was found that significant changes occurred when students were taught to identify and classify their own reading errors as a regular part of a corrective and remedial reading program. The instructional program began with the students analyzing their results on a standardized reading test. From this analysis they formulated general reading goals. Skills packages employing self-correcting formats were utilized in meeting general and specific reading needs. Study questions with "key words," or concept words, were used to scan literature and determine answers. If tutorees needed extra word identification skills, they could select skills packages to study. Students' oral reading was recorded and errors were noted and classified by the tutor. Gradually students were asked to detect and classify their own oral reading errors. Such self-evaluative procedures encouraged students to engage in more frequent assessments of reading performance, conserved teacher time for instruction, promoted student self-competition, and encouraged a more amenable attitude on the part of students toward teacher suggestions for improvement. (References are included.) (AL)

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Pupil Accountability and Reading

The purpose of this paper is to present a self-evaluative approach to the diagnosis and remediation of oral reading difficulties in a high school level tutorial reading program.

Accountability of the learner implies an increased involvement in the evaluation of his own reading. Yet, some classroom practices do little to motivate the student to do something about his own reading problems. This may be due to the amount of class time spent in activities dominated by the teacher. As a result, the teacher is active while the pupil assumes a passive role. The teacher engages in most of the talking, directing, explaining, goal setting, assignment making, and evaluation taking place in the classroom. Consequently, little of the responsibility for learning is shifted to the student where it belongs.

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But can students assume the aforementioned responsibilities? Although the extent to which a student may be held accountable for his learning must be tempered in terms of individual capabilities, there are aspects of his own learning for which the student may be held accountable. Research(4) indicates that students can be held accountable for: (1) Utilizing a knowledge of identified reading weaknesses from test results in the selection of practice materials for the purpose of resolving personalized reading needs; (2) Noting those words, prior to reading, which would cause the student difficulty in oral reading; (3) Applying the awareness of specific types of oral reading errors in forestalling the repetition of these errors.

A tutorial reading program was devised for high school students which encorporated the above findings into classroom practice. The ten tutors for the program were enrolled in an undergraduate reading course for secondary teachers. The ten tutorees were sophomores who, with five others, had been placed in one English Literature section on the basis of low achievement. Although a combination of factors contributed to their poor academic performances, deficiency in word identification skills was a common denominator for the ten students who received tutoring in the program. The tutoring was conducted at the high school during one of the regularly scheduled English periods and continued weekly throughout the semester. Each week, the tutor received a copy of the English teacher's lesson for the following week. By reshaping the lesson in terms of concept level and supporting skills, the tutors helped the tutorees acquire the necessary information to

contribute to the discussion of chapter assignments. At the outset of the program, questions were selected from the lesson which were of a literal level of comprehension but encompassing the concepts to be derived from a particular literary work.

Instructional Program

The initial tutoring sessions were devoted to the establishment of goals. Each tutoree was helped to analyze the results of the Iowa Silent Reading Test which had been administered earlier in the school year. The tutoree was asked to rank his performance on subtests in descending order from highest to lowest grade scores. Items on subtests receiving the lowest scores, two years or more below current grade placement, were analyzed more carefully. Students were asked to identify the problem(s) in the incorrect items which they thought kept them from getting the correct answer. Further introspection was encouraged concerning problems in past and present reading performance before general reading goals were expressed in writing. The goals set by the tutorees had the following commonalities: (1) the need to increase vocabulary; (2) greater understanding of what was read (primarily sentence comprehension); (3) increasing the speed of reading; and, (4) decoding.

After general reading goals had been established, an informal reading inventory was administered to each tutoree to note word identification problems as well as functional reading levels. The instructional reading levels of the tutorees ranged from fourth through sixth grade. Word call errors were categorized by type and the following descending

order of occurrence was noted: (1) Substitutions; (2) Omissions; (3) Repetitions; and, (4) Additions. In conjunction with his tutor, the tutoree assessed his miscues at the instructional level. Specific errors in letter-sound association and oral reading behaviors e.g., substitutions and omissions (noting particularly the position of the error within a miscalled word) were indicated in a Pupil Reading Record along with the general reading goals.

Each instructional period was developed around: (1) the concepts to be understood through the materials in the English Literature course; (2) the initial reading skills (vocabulary, comprehension, speed, decoding) which were identified as the general goals necessary to support the understanding of literary concepts; and, (3) additional reading goals, pertaining to the specific reading behaviors of individual tutorees. Skills packages, employing a self-corrective format, were utilized in meeting general and specific reading needs.

Speeding Assignment Completion. The ability to skim for unknown words in print prior to oral reading was utilized in locating the answers to five to eight selected questions in each literature assignment. Each question was skimmed for unknown words and/or the "key words" (concept words) which would help to locate a given answer. The "key" or unknown words were often one and the same. The effect of this "key word" emphasis was to increase the speed with which the assignment was accomplished. With the tutor's help, identification skills were applied to the unknown or/and "key words" by the tutoree. When word pronunciation had been attained, the tutoree used his "key words" and the page, column, and paragraph numbers (supplied by the tutor for each question) to de-

termine the location of the answer statement in his textbook. This statement was then copied by the tutoree in answer to the question. This same procedure was followed until all the selected questions had been answered. It should be noted again that, initially, only questions classified as literal comprehension were selected for study.

Tutorees needing skill in the identification and use of "key words" were given practice at independent level through location skill packages. The independent level was chosen for specific skill development because it minimized the number of other problems the tutoree would encounter in the attainment of specific skills. The skill packages contained a variety of reading levels and selections e.g., Literature Sampler (6), Specific Skill Series(3), Kaleidoscope Readers(1), and S.R.A. Reading Laboratories(10). The tutoree made his own selection of practice materials from those contained in the location skills packages. When consistent proficiency in the identification and location of "key words", both literal and inferential, was achieved at a particular reading level, more difficult selections were chosen.

Decoding. Decoding was taught in conjunction with the location of "key words" and/or unknown words in assigned literature questions and answers. New problems in letter-sound association and word identification were added to the Pupil Reading Record. With help, the tutoree attempted the identification of unknown words. When pronunciation was attained, the tutoree selected one of the word identification skills listed in his Reading Record for practice e.g., the sounds of g, silent letters, etc. Often the skill had been needed in one of the words just decoded. If the correction required an oral pronunciation, it was prerecorded on a cassette so the tutoree could check his own performance against that

which was recorded. The tutoree selected specific lessons for practice from skills packages containing materials such as the Macmillan Reading Spectrum(5), Phonetic Keys to Reading(7), Specific Skills Series(3), and Conquests in Reading(9). When proficiency was acquired in a given skill, the tutoree requested a test-out criterion. This was a selection at the tutoree's instructional level which contained several words sampling the skill to be assessed. The tutoree was appraised of the number of correct responses he had to make in order for his performance to be judged satisfactory. If the performance was satisfactory, practice on this particular skill was discontinued and a new skill would take its place in future practice sessions.

The behaviors noted in the Reading Record, which were based upon the informal reading inventory, were reviewed by the tutoree. This review provided a readiness for oral reading by reflecting upon the error types commonly found in the tutoree's reading performance (e.g., substitutions, omissions, or additions) and the positions of errors within words e.g., medial, initial, final. The passages containing the answers to the literature questions were read orally and tape recorded. As the tutoree read each answer from his textbook, the tutor noted the total number of word call errors, by classification, on the tutoree's answer sheet opposite the appropriate statement. When all answers had been read, tape recorded, and oral reading errors noted and classified by the tutor, the tutoree replayed the tape. During the replay of each answer, the tutoree compared what he heard with its printed counterpart in order to locate discrepancies. The identified errors were then categorized and the next taped answer played which

started the identification-classification process anew until all answers to the literature questions had been assessed. As sophistication was acquired in the tutoree's ability to identify his own oral reading errors, tutor guidance was eliminated. Together, the tutoree and tutor conducted a final evaluation of oral reading errors and the ability of the tutoree to identify them. New, continued, and deminishing reading behaviors were noted in the Pupil Reading Record by the tutoree. In this manner, the awareness of specific types of oral reading errors was used to forestall the repetition of these same errors in future reading.

Vocabulary and Comprehension. The meanings of "key" or unknown words in print were approached through prefixes and suffixes when appropriate. The tutoree selected specific lessons from skill packages which dealt with the prefixes and/or suffixes included in the structure of "key" or problem words. The materials in each package included both tutor-made and commercially produced materials, examples of the latter being Conquests in Reading(9), Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension Workshops(11) (12), and Be A Better Reader(13). As the tutoree attained proficiency in the application of selected affixes and their meanings to the interpretation of root words, he requested a test-out. The structuring for the test-out was the same as mentioned previously under the heading of Decoding. When the tutoree had met specific needs in prefixes and suffixes, he met further vocabulary needs by selecting lessons from a variety of skills packages such as: synonyms and antonyms using materials from Conquests in Reading(9), The Word Builder(2), Word Games(8); dictionary work based on the vocabulary listed in the teacher's guide for each chapter in the literature text and lessons developed by

the tutor; and, regular vocabulary lessons in materials like Be A Better Reader(13) and Reading For Understanding(14).

Summary

Significant changes were noted in teacher/learner accountability through the use of a self-evaluative approach to the diagnosis and remediation of oral reading difficulties. Training students in the identification and classification of their own oral reading errors as a regular part of corrective and remedial reading programs: (1) encourages the student to engage in more frequent assessments of reading performance; (2) conserves teacher time for instruction; (3) aids teachers in the early selection of appropriate methods and materials for reading instruction; (4) promotes student self-competition; and, (5) supports a more amenable student attitude to teacher suggestions for improvement.

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